

# The Center for Wisdom's Women



## **Mission Statement:**

The Center for Wisdom's Women is a sacred and safe place that supports and empowers women.

The Center is a day drop-in center for women that functions as a place where women can gather to break isolation, build community and enrich and better their lives. Over time, we nurture self esteem and support women in overcoming the odds against them. Together they build inner resources, pursue life affirming relationships, and develop their potential. It happens with lots of patience, deep listening and intentional hospitality; by providing activities, programs and support groups; through building partnerships with businesses, other agencies and service providers; and includes advocacy on behalf of women. We also offer the unique ability to tend to the inner spirituality of women who come to us, but do so in a way that is broadly inclusive of any or no religious background.

Except for the full time salaried Executive Director and contracted bookkeeper, the Center is staffed by volunteers. The core volunteers are called "Companions." These women come with a professional background in social work, chaplaincy, teaching or other related field. Most are retired. They work a minimum of a half day weekly, on the same day and time each week, and they serve as our non-anxious, non-judgmental listening presence. They meet together as a team monthly. Other volunteers tend to the front desk and offer hospitality, and help with cleaning the physical space. They are primarily composed of women who first came as guests. They are called the Sophia Circle and meet together monthly for lunch, sharing, planning and learning. Each team has a retreat annually. We are often host to student interns and volunteers from USM, Bates, the Community College and Chaplaincy Institute of Maine.

Open weekdays, the Center offer programs every morning and afternoon. Programs include health and wellness, support groups, cooking classes, art and crafts, and game days. We have begun offering occasional special events on evenings and Saturdays. We have monthly clothing give-away and women can request a free bag of donated hygiene items each month. We also keep oatmeal for those who need breakfast, and have a shower available for those who are living on the street or are without plumbing. We frequently make referrals to shelters, social services and mental health programs, and domestic violence and sexual assault agencies.

**Funding and Governance:** Founded in 1999 by a Roman Catholic order, The Daughters of Wisdom, The Center is now privately run. Start-up funding has come from four major sources, each with a commitment over several years. The long-term goal is to be primarily funded through private donations, with only about 10% of our \$90,000 budget dependent on grants. We recognize that this as an aggressive goal that will be reached only over time. As of now we are over halfway to our target on both the individual number and level of donors. The core group of funders are called SHEROs at \$240 annually. Of our mailing list, 25% contribute. Trinity Episcopal Church, located in the same neighborhood, serves as our fiscal sponsor. We have a very engaged 11 member Board that meets monthly for 2.5 hours. At least one woman from the Center sits on the Board and one Trinity Church member. A new Finance Committee provides oversight of our finances.

**Population Served:** We are located in a low income, high risk neighborhood. Most of the guests bring with them the many troubles of poverty such as abusive relationships, addictions, unfair treatment, mental and physical health issues, loneliness, and compromised nutrition and hygiene. In the last five years we have served just over 850 individual women. In 2013 we logged 3495 visits and registered 243 new women which was an increase of 25% over the previous year. Women who come to the Center range in age from the twenties to eighties, most are white, many with a French Canadian background. Some of the growing African American community is now coming. Other than when specifically invited, we have not experienced visits from the immigrant residents as they have their own support network. Although it does not happen regularly, we do have a children's play room and women may bring young children with them.

*The Center has shown me to stand up for myself and stop being silent. I knew I always had it in me. But you inspired me to make a difference in my own self and my community to help others. I am grateful to be part of the team.*  
- Bonnie, guest and Sophia Circle volunteer.

The Center is very low barrier - any woman can come, any day, no appointments, at no charge, and with minimal paperwork. The primary value that underlies all the work is respect. Women of all races, ethnicities, classes, religions, backgrounds, abilities are welcomed and valued for who they are. Each woman is treated with dignity and in a way that honors her as a unique individual.

**Info:** [www.wisdomswomen.org](http://www.wisdomswomen.org)    <https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Center-for-Wisdoms-Women>  
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